



File Code: 2810**Date:** June 7, 2016**Subject:** 2017-2021 Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company Surface Exploration Scoping Letter

Dear Interested Party:

I am inviting your participation on the proposed Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company's (HGCMC) 2017-2021 Surface Exploration Plan that is being prepared for analysis in an environmental assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of your participation is to gather your issues, concerns, or opportunities that may better inform the development of mitigations and/or alternatives in the EA. Details of the proposal, including supplemental maps of the project area and other information can be obtained from the project website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49406>.

The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, provides the public right to identify and extract locatable mineral resources from public lands open to mineral entry. The Greens Creek Mine is an underground metals mine that has been operating continuously on Admiralty Island since 1987, with the exception of a temporary curtailment of operations from 1993 through 1996. The mine produces in excess of 2,000 tons of ore per day, which contains silver, zinc, lead and gold. As known mineral resources at the Greens Creek Mine are extracted, it becomes necessary to locate and identify new mineral resources as proposed in the 2017-2021 Surface Exploration Plan. The Greens Creek Mine employs approximately 300 personnel from local communities. Annual exploratory drilling for future mineral resources is fundamental to the sustained operation of the Greens Creek Mine.

The purpose and need of this project is to minimize adverse environmental impacts on resources by regulating the functions, work, and activities connected with the proposed plan submitted by HGCMC for mineral exploration activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The need for the Forest Service to take this action is to comply with legal requirements in response to the proposed Plan of Operations (as defined in 36 CFR 228.5) and to ensure that "operations are conducted so as, where feasible, to minimize adverse environmental impacts on National Forest surface resources" (as defined in 36 CFR 228.8). The shift from an annual authorization to a five-year authorization is being implemented in order to gain efficiencies in permitting and operating the exploration program.

HGCMC proposes to conduct mineral exploration activities, specifically core drilling, soil sampling, geophysical surveys, and geologic mapping. All activities will be adjacent to the Greens Creek Mine within the Greens Creek Land Exchange and on their Federal lode mining claims located on Admiralty Island, Alaska. HGCMC's land package totals over 24 square miles, referred to herein as the 'project area,' with the southern half being the Land Exchange and the northern half being Federal lode mining claims. Within the project area, smaller 'areas of interest' (AOI) have been identified. Core drilling activities will be limited to within the two AOI's. Geophysical surveys, geologic mapping, and soil sampling will extend outside the AOI boundaries, but will remain within the project area.



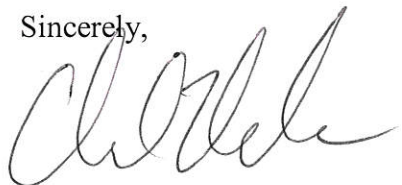
Some of the activities are located within the Greens Creek Inventoried Roadless Area and no temporary or permanent road construction is proposed. The proposed action is located within the Admiralty Island National Monument Non-Wilderness Land Use Designation (LUD) and Semi-Remote Recreation LUD as identified in the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The proposed activities are consistent with the Forest Plan LUDs as they allow for the development of mineral resources.

The project is subject to predecisional administrative review procedures under 36 CFR 218.7 parts (a) and (b). The objection process will provide opportunity to comment after the final EA and draft DN are made available and before the final decision is made per, 36 CFR 218.7 (c). In order to be eligible to file an objection, specific written comments related to the project must be submitted during this scoping opportunity or during any other period public comment period that is specifically identified on this EA (36 CFR 218.5). Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements of eligibility as an individual. Objections received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only. Names and addresses of those who comment and/or file objections will become part of the public record. For more information on how the objection process works for projects and activities implementing land and resource management plans and the requirements, you may access the regulations under 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B on the Government Publishing Office web site at: <http://tinyurl.com/36CFR218>

We are currently transitioning from postal mailings to electronic mailings (emails) for NEPA projects like this one. You can sign up for future email updates on this project by going to <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49406> - sign up at "Subscribe to Email Updates" under Get Connected. More information about this transition is being sent through postal mail and email. Please look for this information in your mail box and please respond to the mailing by the date stated so that we can assure that you continue to receive information on projects of interest to you.

Comments regarding this project are always accepted, but in order to be eligible to file an objection, your comments for this scoping must be received by July 8, 2016. Please submit comments to comments-alaska-tongass-juneau@fs.fed.us with 2017-2021 Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company Surface Exploration the subject line. Or, you may submit your comments by mail to Curtis Canton, Admiralty Island National Monument, 8510 Mendenhall Loop Road, Juneau, AK 99801, or by fax at 907-586-8808. By responding to scoping, it will ensure that you will receive the EA and the draft DN. A copy of the Final EA and draft DN is scheduled for distribution in November 2016. If you have any further questions about this project, please contact Curtis Caton at 907-789-6273 or curtislcaton@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



CHAD VANORMER
Monument Ranger